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ABSTRACT

This paper, which initially appeared in the journal Womanpower, uses the Cinderella fairy tale as a parallel to the present situation of women in their preparation for and participation in the labor market. The federally supported vocational education programs are preparing female enrollees for staying in the home, as illustrated by the fact that 49.2% of all young women enrolled in federally authorized vocational education are studying home economics, and the remainder are in programs designed to provide preparation for homemaking, rather than training for work outside the home. Data is offered which indicates that today's girls will face a reality vastly at variance with the home role for which they are being prepared: (1) over half of women over 18 are in the work force; (2) married women can expect to work for 25 years; (3) one out of eight families is headed by a woman; and (4) child support by fathers in divided families is almost nonexistent. Though forbidden by Title IX, it is well documented that unequal treatment is still pervasive in federally funded vocational education. Some suggestions are offered as to how to change the present situation. (NG)

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Cinderella Doesn't Live Here Anymore

by Mary Ellen Verheyden-Hilliard

Two thirds of *all* secondary vocational students are girls. The majority—55.5 percent—of all students in secondary, postsecondary, and adult vocational education are girls and women. And what is happening to the majority of vocational education students? It seems they are being better prepared for Cinderellahood than for jobs.

Cinderella, you may remember, was expected to do the cooking and cleaning and to do it well. She was also much admired for looking beautiful and maintaining a manner of grace and charm while carrying out her duties under the most difficult of circumstances.

When she was miraculously discovered by the Prince and went with him to live in the castle, we feel fairly certain that she did not take up an outside career of castle building or working in the sword repair shop in town. Rather, she remained in the Cinderella intensive spheres of nongainful castle economics where she was kept very busy with the enormous responsibility of seeing to the food, housing, clothing, and herbal needs of perhaps over 100 persons. She also suffered the emotional and physical drain of looking after her own family, which increased at the approximate rate of one a year.

The Prince, of course, never abandoned her (except for occasional trips to Crusader conventions) because that would have meant abandoning his castle, and there weren't too many other castles around where he could get a job as Prince without a lot of bloodshed. They never got divorced because that wasn't allowed. If things got too bad, she occasionally went to live in the convent, where she continued her female intensive work in an aura of sanctity. Usually, however, the Prince and Cinderella lived happily ever after—which wasn't really so hard to do because most people of the time tended to be dead by the time they were 35.

In many ways, the country's federally supported vocational education programs are preparing female enrollees for Cinderella's lifestyle. Statistics supporting this view appear in *Women in Vocational Education*, a report prepared by Dr. Marilyn Steele for Project Baseline, a massive study of vocational education which was funded by the National Center for Education Statistics and published late in 1974. The Baseline report says that 49.2 percent of all young women enrolled in federally authorized vocational education are in home economics, but that only 2.4 percent of all home economics enrollees are in training for gainful employment. The remainder are in programs designed to provide preparation for homemaking, not to offer training for work outside the home.

Unromantic Realities

Another 29 percent of vocational education's female enrollees are in female-intensive clerical fields, jobs that seldom offer high pay or promising career ladders. These statistics suggest that at least three-quarters of vocational education's female enrollees are preparing for Cinderellahood or for "something to do" while waiting for the Prince.

But, you may say, what's wrong with that? Most girls are going to get married and become mothers anyway. Why not prepare them to care for a Prince and children rather than pushing them into the "rat race" that has given men twice the ulcers of women and sent them to early graves? What's so terrible about expecting girls to grow up to be happily married, to take care of happy, healthy children, and to depend on their husbands to take care of their financial needs?

The answer to all these questions is that today's girls will face an adult reality that is dramatically at variance with the Cinderella myth. Figures from the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and other governmental agencies show that:

- 53.9 percent of all women over the age of 18 are in the work force,
- *even* if a woman marries, she can expect to work for 25 years,
- 13 million women with children are in the labor force,
- 1 out of every 8 families is headed by a woman,
- 1 out of 5 black families is headed by a woman,
- 2 out of 3 *poor* black families are headed by women,
- the divorce rate is up 109 percent since 1962 and rising,
- child support by fathers in divided families is nearly nonexistent, and
- the majority of old people who are poor are women.

These facts clearly document the need for girls to prepare for lives vastly different from Cinderella's. And vocational education, it would seem, is an excellent channel for offering such preparation.

As already noted, the great majority of girls in vocational education are enrolled in female intensive programs. And according to *Women in Vocational Education*, these traditional programs dominated by females offer training for only 33 different occupations, while fields in which males predominate offer 95 job training options. Moreover, vocational areas in which girls are in the majority have a higher ratio of students to teachers than do areas in which most students are male.

Differential treatment on the basis of sex in educational programs receiving

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Illustrations by Gina Falcone Skelton

Federal funds is explicitly forbidden by title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Yet, various reports, studies, and congressional hearings document that unequal treatment is still pervasive in vocational education.

For example, a recent General Accounting Office report on the Federal role in vocational education pointed out and criticized sex-role stereotyping in vocational programs. April 1975 hearings held by the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education of the House Committee on Education and Labor also focused on sex stereotyping. Even those who have Federal responsibility for vocational education recognized and underscored the problem.

The Office of Education's Commissioner Terrell Bell testified, "There is more sex-role stereotyping in vocational education than in any other area." Dr. William Pierce, the Office of Education's Deputy Commissioner for Occupational and Adult Education, said that Project Baseline's *Women in Vocational Education* and other reports "verified what we already knew—that we still face serious problems in providing an equal opportunity for all students to receive training."

The long-range danger of sex-role stereotyping is that it provides the foundation on which institutionalized sex discrimination has been—and, in some cases, continues to be—built. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 makes it illegal to bar one sex from vocational education schools or programs or to set up separate shop or home economics classes for boys or girls. The law also requires single sex institutions to submit plans for eliminating admissions barriers for the other sex. However, these requirements have not yet been fully implemented. For example, *Compliance Enforcement in Area Vocational Education Schools*, a May 1974 paper published by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Office for Civil Rights, states:

> "By law . . . a single sex institution is in noncompliance *right now* if it's not eliminating admissions barriers according to plan. And according to title IX, the plan was to have been submitted and approved by June 4, 1973. So far, no plans have been approved."

As of September 1975, this count had not increased.

Dinah Shelton and Dorothy Berndt in an article in the prestigious *California Law Review* of July 1974 have put the matter quite succinctly: "The evidence of sex discrimination in vocational education is overwhelming."

Why has lack of equal opportunity for girls and women been prevalent in vocational education? Lack of interest in this issue on the part of vocational educators may be one likely answer. The *Women in Vocational Education* report of Project Baseline charges that "vocational technical education is a power base for male educators, despite the fact that the

Cinderella

majority of enrollments are female." For example, women account for only 15 percent of all members on State advisory councils on vocational education, and the first woman to be a State director of vocational education took office in the late summer of 1975.

At the April 1975 congressional hearings, Dr. JoAnn Steiger noted that, while working at the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, she was "dismayed to find that many vocational educators—including some of the most influential ones—regard the vocational and training needs of women as inconsequential. Some refuse to concede there is a problem. Others view the matter as of the lowest priority."

Tell It Like It Is

Among vocational educators who *are* concerned with educational equity, two problems are often cited as roadblocks to fair vocational development for girls. One roadblock, they say, sits at the beginning of training, and the other awaits at the end. Girls, it is reiterated, simply have not enrolled and will not enroll in nontraditional programs because of societal and parental pressures.

But that is begging the question. Vocational educators can address this problem by

- informing parents, students, and community members of the reasons for girls to consider new career alternatives,
- informing counselors at junior high schools and other schools which feed into vocational schools of nontraditional vocational training options for girls,
- presenting programs for students at feeder schools to let them know they are welcome in nontraditional programs and to explain why those programs may be to their long-term advantage, and
- holding workshops that will help vocational education teachers learn how to encourage girls who are trying to reach nontraditional goals.

To simply wait for girls to appear at vocational or technical schools asking for nontraditional enrollment is like the situation a few years back when educators in all-white schools "waited" for black children to seek admission—unasked and unencouraged.

A second problem cited by vocational educators is that employers are not willing to hire women for nontraditional fields so it is useless to train them for new fields. But title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 clearly states that a school cannot allow itself to be used by employers attempting to select employees on a discriminatory basis.

The Office of Education is making some efforts to address the needs of girls and women in vocational education. For example, the Commissioner of Education has sent a letter asking officials responsible for appointing State vocational education advisory council members to pay special attention to the fact that so few council members are women. In order to bring the question of sex-role stereotyping to the attention of the 51 State vocational education directors, a 1½-

hour workshop on the subject was presented during the directors' 3-day conference in Washington in May 1975.

In the area of research and development, the Office of Education's Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education is currently funding three projects. These include a study to determine why women of certain racial and ethnic groups enter nontraditional occupations and what helps them to remain in the programs, an effort to develop a bibliography of books on women in nontraditional occupations, and a study of 10 urban schools and communities to determine what factors lead to an acceptance of women in traditionally male dominated courses. The funds invested in these programs total $181,977. Vocational education's total discretionary budget for research and development at the Federal level is $8 million.

At the State level, research and demonstration projects are exploring issues related to stereotypic assumptions about work and training. For example, a Texas project is developing a model program for recruiting males and females in vocational education programs previously dominated by the opposite sex, and a North Carolina project is developing an in-service training program for educators concerning sex stereotyping in vocational education. Federal discretionary funding for research and development projects at the State level also totals $8 million.

Such efforts at the State and Federal levels are commendable beginning efforts toward ending sex-role stereotyping in vocational education and should be given the credit they deserve. They are, however, in no way commensurate with the magnitude of the problem nor do they offer hope for prompt and extensive action and impact.

For example, *proposed* Federal legislation would designate the correction of sex-role stereotyping in training and employment opportunities as a priority issue. But even if passed, the legislation would not take effect until fiscal year 1977 and implementation would doubtless take longer. Given the amount of time needed to issue regulations and guidelines for new Federal laws and to set up compliance mechanisms and procedures, it is likely that the girls who enter high school this fall will not benefit from such legislation and that at least one more generation of female vocational education students will be lost.

Slipper Doesn't Fit

The human cost can only escalate. As Dr. Janice Law Treker has pointed out in an article in *Social Education* in October 1974:

> "Young minority group women make the lowest wages, have the least desirable jobs and the highest unemployment rates. They are the poorest of the poor, yet the stress . . . in the schools remains on upgrading male not female employment."

Many of these young minority group women will find themselves somewhere in the statistics that indicate that 1 out of 5 black families is headed by a woman and 2 out of 3 poor black families are headed by women.

The difficulty which must be faced, I believe, is that eliminating sex-role stereotyping and the resultant sex discrimination which limits the aspirations and therefore the lives of girls and women will require *active, systematic, ongoing, massive, committed intervention* articulated and funded at the national level and underscored in the same manner at the State level. While recognizing that money isn't everything, I cannot help but wonder what would happen if 55.5 percent of all research and development funds at the State and Federal levels were directed to the needs of the 55.5 percent of vocational education students who are female.

Preparation for Cinderellahood is no longer a long-range vocation for responsible educators to be offering their female students. The glass slipper of sex-stereotyped education is far too fragile for tomorrow's world. Vocational educators need to remove their blinders, just as their colleagues are beginning to do in other educational institutions, and to take a hard look at the kinds of lives for which their students need to be prepared. If they do not, the likelihood is now great that those blinders will run them headlong into time-consuming and damaging sex discrimination suits brought by individuals and organizations concerned with educational equity.

And there is another facet of educational equity which needs to be considered. Dr. Virginia Trotter, Assistant Secretary for Education, has noted in a recent speech to the administrators of vocational education in large urban areas that vocational education is 50 percent to 70 percent more costly than an academic high school curriculum and that 2 years after graduation, vocational education graduates earn about the same amount as classmates who dropped out before getting their diplomas. It seems, then, that funds are being spent on females *and* males which are not buying either group the education they need.

Surely the $600 million vocational education program can make the changes necessary to serve all of its students both equally and well. And if such changes cannot be made in an expeditious manner, another question will need to be asked: Why should the Nation maintain a program which, as the record indicates, is presently doing so little for so many at such high cost? □